

Even if Najib is cleared, will anyone trust him after this?

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By Sheridan Mahavera

The Prime Minister will still face a trust deficit, said a well-known political analyst, even if he is cleared of wrongdoing in the latest scandal involving debt-laden 1Malaysia Development Berhad.

Wan Saiful Wan Jan of the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) said this is because Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak has let these allegations of wrongdoing go on for far too long before taking any action.

The string of allegedly suspicious 1MDB deals along with stories of his family's lavish spending have snowballed and left an indelible impression among the public that something is seriously wrong with the Prime Minister.

His critics have also questioned the credibility of the agencies tasked with investigating these accusations, including the one where monies related to 1MDB were transferred to his bank accounts, Wan Saiful said.

"There could be some positive impact if the investigations clear his name. But the question is, will people still believe him?"

"To a politician, trust is very important for getting public support," said Wan Saiful, who is IDEAS chief executive.

Najib's image has been battered by the series of scandals surrounding troubled state investor 1MDB, which has chalked up RM42 billion in debts and at one point threatened to harm's Malaysia's sovereign ratings.

The Attorney General today said that an investigation is being carried out on the latest allegation that monies from 1MDB have been transferred into bank accounts belonging to Najib.

Yesterday, the Wall Street Journal and whistle blower site Sarawak Report claimed they saw documents showing that US\$700 million (RM2.67 billion) was moved among government agencies, banks and entities linked to 1MDB into the prime minister's personal accounts in five separate deposits.

It said that the largest transactions were deposits of US\$620 million and another one for US\$61 million in March 2013, two months before the general election.

Before that, the WSJ alleged that 1MDB had indirectly supported Najib's general election campaign in 2013 through a purchase of power assets.

Najib has strenuously denied both claims, saying that it was a concerted campaign of political sabotage.

1MDB is also being investigated by the auditor-general and the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) on how it managed to rack up RM42 billion in debt after being in business for only six years.

Wan Saiful, however, believes that these investigations and denials came too late.

“People have been talking and shouting about 1MDB for a long time, but it took longer for them to announce these probes.

“For a politician, he should have quickly stepped in to answer these charges. If you let accusations go on for too long, people make up their own judgments.”

In February this year, the New York Times ran an article that questioned the source of Najib’s family’s wealth, including that of his step son Riza Aziz and his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor. – July 4, 2015.

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